

lose money—treating Medicare beneficiaries. An inadequate and arbitrary payment system jeopardizes the ability of community health centers to continue to provide necessary primary care to the 1.5 million Medicare beneficiaries who are seen at community health centers each year, many of who live in the most isolated and medically underserved regions of this country.

Let me say a word on community health centers, because I am a very strong advocate of that program. The truth is that in the midst of the disintegrating health care system, one of the major crises we are facing is in primary health care access. All over America, especially in rural areas, millions and millions of people simply cannot get access to a doctor, to a nurse, to a dentist, to people who will help them deal with their day-to-day health problems. The insanity of continuing that situation, that lack of health care access, means people will simply get sicker. They are going to go to the emergency room and they will end up in the hospital at far greater expense and a lot more human suffering.

I happen to believe this country has to join the rest of the industrialized world and establish a national health care program which guarantees health care to every man, woman, and child. I think at a time when we spend twice as much per person on health care as any other nation and have 47 million people uninsured and see our social indices, in terms of infant mortality or longevity, much worse than many other countries, I think we should finally conclude there is something fundamentally wrong with our health care system.

Health care should be a right of all people. We should do it in a cost-effective way. The function of health care should not be to make insurance companies rich or make drug companies rich but should be to provide quality health care to every man, woman, and child.

In the midst of all that, while we try to take on the insurance companies and all their lobbyists and while we try to take on the drug companies and all their lobbyists and advertising and campaign contributions, there is one simple thing we can do, where I suspect there is going to be tripartisan support, and that is substantially increase the funding for community health centers. In that regard, I thank Senator KENNEDY and Senator ENZI for a very strong authorization package that came out of the Health, Education, Labor Committee. I thank Senator HARKIN and Senator SPECTER for their support in giving us a reasonable increase in appropriations funding. But we have a long way to go.

The simple truth is—and this is a point that should be understood by all Members—if we spend as a nation \$2 or \$3 billion more on community health centers, do you know what? We could provide primary health care access to every man, woman, and child. That is

about 1 week of the war in Iraq. So you have war in Iraq, 1 week; or \$2 billion or \$3 billion building hundreds of community health centers, providing primary health care, dental care, mental health counseling, low-cost prescription drugs, to every man, woman, and child.

In the course of the coming months and years, I will be fighting for that \$2 or \$3 billion. It certainly is not going to solve all our health care problems, but by providing a place where any American—whether you are insured, uninsured, Medicare, Medicaid—regardless of your income you can walk in and get high-quality primary health care—wow, that is a huge step forward in this country.

In order to make sure these community health centers function, we have to do something else. Do you know what we have to do? We have to graduate doctors and nurses. We are living at a time when we are not graduating from medical school enough doctors or enough nurses or enough dentists. We have to work on that. One of the ways we work on that is to significantly increase funding for the Health Services Corps, a program which provides debt forgiveness and scholarships for those willing to serve in underserved medical areas.

There is a lot of work to be done. I think we are making some progress on the Medicare bill coming before us. The day has to come when all our people, by right, have primary health care access and access to health care.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I was asked by the Senator from Montana, Mr. TESTER, if there would be any objection if I asked that, after I finish my remarks, he be recognized for 5 minutes; that the Democratic time be extended 5 minutes and the Republican time be extended 5 minutes.

Is there any objection to that?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### FISA

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I know this is morning business, but I need to get people's attention back on FISA, I hope. Let me clarify some things that have been said earlier today. From time to time, some have tried to rewrite the history on what happened 1 year ago in producing the Protect America Act, our first attempt to fix the problems with foreign intelligence surveillance 1 year ago. That was not pretty, but I note there have been mischaracterizations of it. After last year, many critics of FISA, most notably in the House, tried to rewrite history and discredit ADM Mike McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, and this compelled me to speak out on the matter at this time. He, in my view, from what I saw, acted in good faith, and he was charged with not having done so. But it seems there

is another effort today to rewrite history. I can say, as vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee and the cosponsor of the Protect America Act, I was the lead negotiator during the final hours of the Congress, as we tried to pass a critical short-term update of our Nation's law governing terrorist surveillance.

As one who was there, I dispute the misinformation that was spread and largely by those who were not there. I will outline the events as they occurred, and here is what happened.

As I think most of us know, in January 2007, the President announced that the terrorist surveillance program was coming under the FISA Court. Our Director of National Intelligence, Admiral McConnell, subsequently stated that after that time, the intelligence community lost a significant amount of collection capability and that, combined with increased threat, compelled him to ask Congress to modernize FISA, sooner rather than later.

On April 12, Admiral McConnell sent his full FISA modernization proposal to Congress, and on May 1 he presented it in open session to the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Some would like us to believe that was the first time this became an issue for us, in July, but it was not. The DNI had appeared in open session before the Senate Intelligence Committee and had pleaded with us to update FISA months earlier.

I might say, along with another colleague of ours on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator BAYH, we visited Iraq in early May of 2007, and the Joint Special Operations Commander, LTG Stan McChrystal, told us at that time that the blockage in electronic surveillance by FISA was substantially hurting his ability to gain the intelligence he needed to protect our troops in the field and gain an offensive advantage. I believe I, and perhaps Senator BAYH, spoke about that in committee and on the floor.

Immediately following the admiral's testimony in May, I had urged the Intelligence Committee immediately to mark up FISA legislation. I was told by members of the majority that until the President turned over certain legal opinions from the terrorist surveillance program, Congress would not modernize FISA. That Congress would hold America's security hostage to receiving documents from a program that no longer existed was disheartening to me. We had already received an inordinate amount of documents from the Department of Justice and the Director of National Intelligence. Yet I do not dispute the desire or the right of members to seek privileged documents from the executive branch. In fact, I joined in requesting some of that. But I did disagree with holding up FISA modernization when those documents were not necessary to do that.

Despite the urging from the Director of National Intelligence, and knowing this outdated law was harming our terrorist surveillance capabilities, for

more than 3 months Congress chose to do nothing. Let me be clear, it was Congress that chose to ignore the pleas of the intelligence community. As a matter of fact, in late June, Admiral McConnell had a briefing for the entire Senate. I believe about 42 to 44 of us showed up there. He briefed Members of the Senate, again urging us to modernize FISA. Finally, his pleadings began to gain traction.

In mid-July, Members of Congress agreed to discuss a short-term, scaled-down version of FISA to protect the country for the next few months before we could address comprehensive reform in the fall. Admiral McConnell immediately sent Congress his scaled-down proposal.

Over the next week, Admiral McConnell was given nearly half a dozen versions of unvetted proposals from various congressional staffs across Congress and then pressed for instant support of these proposals. The admiral returned a compromise proposal to the Senate, including some of the provisions requested. Unfortunately, there were numerous bait and switches that took place during that time.

Since the bipartisan committee process was circumvented to craft legislation behind closed doors without input from the relevant committee and the minority, it got messy in the final hours. Even as the vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, I was excluded from the key meetings. Not only was I excluded, most members of the Intelligence Committee, Republican and Democratic, were left out of the process.

Therefore, in the waning moments before the recess, I got together with a number of Democrats, including several from our Intelligence Committee, to discuss the short-term approach for the Protect America Act that Leader McConnell and I had introduced and which had the support of the DNI and the Department of Justice.

Finally, on August 3 and 4, Congress, on a strong bipartisan basis and a desire to get out of town for the August recess, passed the Protect America Act.

That was why it was jammed up. The administration was not trying to stiff us. The administration felt it was being stiffed. Fortunately, a solid, bipartisan majority of the Senate came together, passed the bill, and gave the House, regrettably, no choice but to pass it—which they did. But after the passage of the act, I think we all learned a good lesson. We sat down together on the Senate Intelligence Committee and began, on a bipartisan basis, to work out a permanent solution to FISA. I am very thankful we could do it. We put in a great deal of work. We spent a lot of time with the DNI, with the lawyers and the operatives for the program, and Senator Rockefeller and I worked, in a bipartisan fashion, to come up with a strong committee bill that we passed out of the Senate later on a 68-to-29 vote.

I thank my colleagues on the committee, their staff, and all the Members of Congress who supported us, particularly the 68 who came and voted aye to pass the FISA amendments in February.

That started the process that led us to where we are today. There is a strong bipartisan product before us. There were changes, cosmetic changes largely, made that the House believed were important and the intelligence community assured us would not interfere with their ability to collect information under the structure we had set forth in the FISA amendments that were passed by the Senate.

That is where we are today. I am ready, willing, and able, whenever it is the will of the leadership, to act on amendments that may be before us and try to pass this bill so we will have some certainty for the intelligence community that they will know what the guidelines are for the next period through 2012.

In any event, I will be back when we get on the bill to go over some of the items which are in question. But I think you see our chairman, Senator Rockefeller, who is on the floor, and I can assure you this is a good, solid, bipartisan bill that we should pass.

I see it is a good time to yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized, pursuant to the previous order.

#### GI BILL

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise in support of the bipartisan Webb GI bill, and I urge the Senate to join me in voting to pass it without further delay. As a member of the veterans committee, this legislation has been a big priority of mine for the past year and a half.

Montana is home to more than 100,000 veterans. I have spoken with many of them over the past year and a half, and I was very pleased to work on their behalf last year for the largest increase in funding in the history of the VA.

Earlier this year, the Senate passed my legislation to raise the reimbursement rate for veterans' travel to and from VA facilities. It was the first increase in 30 years.

As American forces continue to be engaged in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is well past time for Congress to step up to the plate and deliver for our veterans.

This new GI bill will provide first-class educational benefits for those who served since 9/11. It will pay for tuition and books and a monthly stipend roughly equivalent to the benefits given to millions of Americans following World War II.

The first GI bill created a vibrant middle class that drives our economy to this day and makes America the envy of the world. This GI bill can do the same again.

Every major veterans organization in this country supports this bill. I under-

stand even the White House has dropped its longstanding opposition, and the President now says he will sign this bill into law.

Passing the 21st century GI bill will be a landmark achievement for this Congress. It will strengthen our Nation's military readiness through better recruitment by making military service a more practical option, and it will provide an important investment in America's future by enabling veterans to afford college at a time when career options and lifetime earning potential are increasingly linked to higher education.

One in nine Montanans have served our country in the military. We have one of the highest veterans rates in the country, and our Montana values compel us to take care of those who have served. Many of my Montana neighbors have written to me in support of this new GI bill for the new "greatest generation."

One airman from Belt, MT, said to me:

I hope this bill passes for myself and for future generations. I have been deployed three times in my five and a half years of active duty service, and will be leaving active duty service within the year. This bill is finally something that will allow people to do the things that they put off and that so many have died for since the beginning of our war on terrorism. I ask you to support this bill and allow all our Armed Forces members to succeed in life and all their endeavors.

Another veteran from Kalispell, MT, wrote:

I read with a great deal of interest your article in the Flathead Beacon about the need for a GI Bill, much like that of what we had in the past. I was able to attend college under the GI Bill after I was discharged from the Army in 1956 under that bill enacted for World War II vets. The GI Bill was instrumental in the creation of our middle class. It gave this child of the Depression an opportunity to experience the degree of success that I very likely would not have been able to achieve had it not been for that GI Bill.

These are just two examples of the many letters I have received from back home. I know many Senators received similar letters. I call on all of my colleagues to join me in voting for this vital legislation. We must pass this bill to honor the service and sacrifice of our Nation's veterans and to invest in America's future.

I have been pleased to work on this important piece of legislation with a bipartisan group of Senators led by the Senator from Virginia, one of my fellow members of the Senate class of 2006.

Senator WEBB and I hail from different parts of the country and different walks of life, but we joined the Senate at the same time with a simple hope: to provide a new direction for our Nation.

Last year, Senator WEBB and I traveled together to Iraq. We were able to visit with quite a few of the brave young men and women who serve our country day in and day out. When you talk to these folks, it really makes you feel that our Nation is in good hands.